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ADANI GETS TO RUN THREE MORE AIRPORTS FOR 50 YRS

The Union Cabinet has okayed leasing of Jaipur, T'puram and Guwahati airports to Gautam Adani-led Adani Enterprises

ADANI HAD WON THE BIDS LAST YEAR

In all, the Adani Group had won the rights to operate six airports through the Public-Private Partnership model. Last year, the Union Cabinet had cleared the leasing out of Ahmedabad, Mangaluru and Lucknow airports. However, the leasing of Jaipur, Thiruvananthapuram and Guwahati airports got caught up in legal hurdles and the Cabinet nod was pending

FURTHER PRIVATISATION ON THE CARDS

- The PPP model has helped the Airports Authority of India increase its revenue and focus on developing more airports and aviation infrastructure in Tier-II & Tier III cities
- Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri said on Tuesday that his ministry will place proposals for further privatisation of airports

₹1,070 cr

UPFRONT PAYMENT THE A.A.I. WILL GET FROM HANDING OVER THE AIRPORTS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

EXPRESS READ

10K troops from J-K to withdraw

New Delhi: The Centre on Wednesday ordered immediate withdrawal of 10,000 paramilitary personnel from Jammu and Kashmir. This is the biggest de-induction of these forces after additional troops were rushed to the UT after the abrogation of Article 370. The decision was taken after the Home Ministry reviewed the deployment of the Central forces in the UT | P9

WB may lower India projection

New Delhi: The World Bank on Wednesday indicated it may further lower its growth projections for India and said critical reforms in key areas such as health, labour, land, skills and finance are needed to come out stronger from the Covid-19 crisis. The World Bank had in May projected the Indian economy contracting by 3.2% in FY21, and rebound slowly in the next fiscal | P12

Covid tests may touch 10L per day

New Delhi: Focusing on the 'test, track and treat' strategy, India has tested more than 8 lakh samples for Covid-19 for the second consecutive day in a row, taking the cumulative tests to 3,17,42,782 so far, the Union Health Ministry said on Wednesday. Aiming to increase the number of tests per day to 10 lakh, as many as 8,01,518 samples were tested in a span of 24 hours, on Tuesday | P9

SC hands Sushant death case to CBI

Says probe by premier agency will improve public confidence and ensure justice

KANU SAROA @ New Delhi

TO boost public confidence in the ongoing probe into the unnatural death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput and to ensure complete justice, the Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Central Bureau of Investigation to take over the probe.

The top court told the Maharashtra government to comply and assist with the investigation. It also directed the Mumbai Police to hand over all evidence collected to the CBI.

Justice Hrishikesh Roy, who gave the verdict, invoked the powers of the SC under Article 142 of the Constitution to ensure 'complete justice'.

The judge turned down the objection by senior lawyer Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who represented the Maharashtra government, that a single judge bench cannot exercise the powers under Article 142 and that it must be a bench having strength of at least two judges.

"When truth meets sunshine, justice will not prevail on the living alone, but after Life's fitful fever, now the departed will also sleep well. Satyameva Jayate," read the 25-page judgment. "Equally importantly, when integrity and credibility of the investigation is discernible, the trust, faith and confidence of the common man in the judicial process will resonate," it added. It also held that the Bihar government had the right to refer the Patna FIR lodged by Rajput's father to CBI. The bench said the CBI will be competent to probe not only the Patna FIR, but also any other FIRs related to the case.

The judge noted that the tug of war between Bihar and Maharashtra over the case and allegations of political interference has cast a cloud over the legitimacy of the probe. P10

BJP hails order, Cong calls for proper probe

The BJP hailed the order as a "triumph of justice". The Congress said the agency should carry out a "proper probe", and asserted that justice won't be delivered by BJP-JDU making statements for "political gains"

CONTEMPT

PRASHANT BHUSHAN WANTS HEARING ON SENTENCE PUSHED

Lawyer-activist, who is guilty of criminal contempt, has moved Supreme Court, seeking that the hearing on his sentence be deferred till review plea is considered | P9

Common recruitment test gets Cabinet's nod

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Union Cabinet on Wednesday gave its nod to constitute a National Recruitment Agency (NRA) to conduct standardised online examinations for Group B and C non-technical posts in the Central Government. The NRA will hold Common Eligibility Tests (CETs) in 12 Indian languages with centres in each district.

Hailing the decision, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who presided over the Cabinet meeting, said the move will herald transparency in recruitment, while doing away with multiplicity of recruitment agencies.

The NRA initially will hold the CET for the Railways, PSU banks and the Staff Selection Commission. The CET score will be valid for three years and there will be no bar on the number of attempts by candidates.

The scores will be the basis of screening for the second and the third level of tests to be conducted by the RRBs, SSC and the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection, officials said. The NRA will conduct the CET separately for graduates, those who have cleared higher secondary exams and matriculates.

The government aims to bring other recruitment agencies on board. Also on the cards are measures to encourage state governments and the private sector to accept CET for their recruitments.

While the government said the CET will be the stepping stone for next-level selection process, the need for subsequent tests might be done away with entirely, a senior official told *TNIE*.

The Cabinet has allocated a sum of ₹1,517.57 crore for the constitution of the NRA which will be an autonomous society and will consist of the members of the SSC, RRB and IBPS.

K B Sandra violence: State asks HC to appoint claims commissioner

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE State Government on Wednesday moved the Karnataka High Court, seeking direction to appoint a Claims Commissioner to estimate the damage, fix liability and award compensation with respect to mass destruction of properties in the violence in DJ Halli and KG Halli police limits in the city on the night of August 11.

In 2009, the Supreme Court said that the high courts may take suo motu action and appoint a Claims Commissioner to investigate the damage caused and award compensation by affixing liability on the perpetrators of the crimes and the organisers of the event, in cases where mass destruction of private and public property and injury to persons takes place due to protests and riots.

Based on this, the Advocate General mentioned the issue of appointing a retired High Court judge or district judge as a Claims Commissioner before a division bench of Chief Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka and Justice Ashok S Kinagi. The bench said it will take up the matter for hearing on Thursday.

The streets of DJ Halli and surrounding areas returned to normal after prohibitory orders were lifted, in Bengaluru on Wednesday | VINOD KUMAR

THREE ADVOCATES TO REPRESENT STATE

The State Government appointed advocates P Prasanna Kumar, P Tejus and B O Chandrashekar as Special Public Prosecutors to represent the state before the courts in cases pertaining to the violence. The appointments were made in response to the appeal made by the DG&IGP.

In the petition filed before the court in response to the report of the city police commissioner, the State Government stated that there was significant and large-scale destruction of both public and private property due to the violence on the night of August 11.

The government stated that the mob also looted some establishments despite efforts by police and that more than 80 police personnel were injured. P7

MORE IN THE NET

Ex-mayor's PA held; Top cop reviews probe

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Central Crime Branch (CCB) on Wednesday arrested the personal assistant of Devara Jeevana Halli BBMP ward corporator and former Mayor R Sampath Raj in connection with the riots of August 11 night. Arun Kumar was arrested based on phone call records which reportedly showed that he had made over 10 calls from his phone to Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) leader Muzammil Pasha and others, who are already arrested.

City Police Commissioner Kamal Pant visited DJ Halli and KG Halli police stations and held a review meeting with officers. He reportedly took details of the FIRs registered and arrests made so far. He advised senior officers to assign inspectors from other police stations and entrust them with investigation of 2-3 cases each, as up to 64 FIRs have been registered. Further, he is said to have asked them to conduct a thorough enquiry and collect clinching evidence. P7

Pranab's condition worsens, has lung infection, say docs

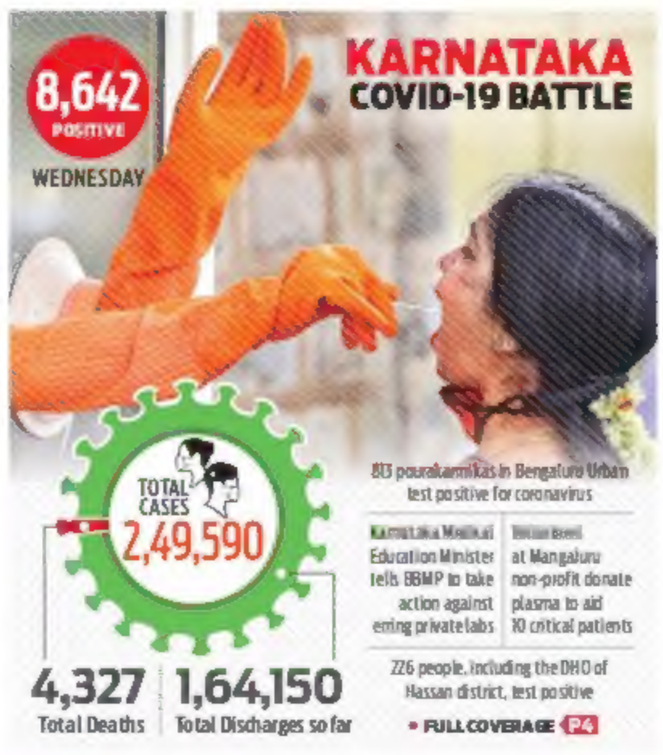
MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

THE health condition of former President Pranab Mukherjee worsened on Wednesday, after infection in his lungs was detected.

"There has been a decline in the medical condition of Hon'ble Shri Pranab Mukherjee as he has developed features of lung infection. He continues to be on ventilator support and is currently being managed by a team of specialists," read a statement by the Army Hospital.

Earlier in the day, the former President's son Abhijit had tweeted saying his father was stable. "With All Your good wishes & sincere efforts of the Doctors, my father is stable now! His vital parameters continue to remain under control & manageable! Positive signs of his improvement is noticed! I request you all to pray for His speedy recovery!" he had tweeted.

The 88-year-old was admitted to the Army Hospital at Delhi Cantonment on August 10 in a critical condition. A detailed examination by the hospital revealed a large brain clot for which he underwent an emergency life-saving surgery. Following the surgery, he continued to remain critical and was put on ventilator support. He was also found to be Covid-positive.


8,642
POSITIVE
WEDNESDAY
KARNATAKA
COVID-19 BATTLE
TOTAL CASES
2,49,590
803 pourakarmikas in Bengaluru Urban test positive for coronavirus
Karnataka Medical Education Minister tells BBMP to take action against erring private labs
Indian Breed at Mangaluru non-profit donate plasma to aid 10 critical patients
226 people, including the DHO of Hassan district, test positive
4,327
Total Deaths
1,64,150
Total Discharges so far
FULL COVERAGE P4

ATMANIRBHAR

Defence import embargo: Opportunity and challenge for Indian industry

RAMU PATIL @ Bengaluru

ON the morning of January 4, 2001, when the homegrown fighter soared into the clear skies over Bengaluru on its maiden flight, it put to rest any doubts over India's capabilities to make a state-of-the-art Light Combat Aircraft (LCA). It gave a new dimension to 'atmanirbharta', or self-reliance, in defence preparedness as well as manufacturing.

Nearly 20 years later, the LCA, which is now part of the Indian Air Force (IAF) fleet, figures on the list of 101 items that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has embargoed for import. Though many of those items are already made or being manufactured locally, the decision, which is part of the Centre's push for its ambitious Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, is expected to give a new thrust to the Indian defence industry.

"It is a step in the right direction to stimulate the Indian defence industry and thereby head towards self-reliance," said Air Marshal B K Pandey (Retired), former Chief of Indian Air Force (IAF) Training Command, Bengaluru. "Most of the items like the LCA, Light Combat Helicopter, Basic Trainer, Light Transport Aircraft are already manufactured here. What the government wants to do now is not to put unnecessary pressure of competition on local industry by importing. The Services will not be able to initiate cases for import of items in this category."

The embargo on imports is planned to be progressively implemented between 2020 and 2024. The list comprises 101 items including hi-tech weapons systems like artillery guns, assault rifles, sonar systems, transport aircraft, LCHs, radars and others. According to the MoD, almost 260 schemes of such items were contracted by the Tri-Services at an approximate cost of Rs 3.5 lakh crore between April 2015 and August 2020. Now, it is estimated that contracts worth almost Rs 4 lakh crore will go to the domestic industry in the next five to seven years.

Dr Ajey Lele, Senior fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), New Delhi, sees it as a very important step from the Indian industry point of view, as they get huge clarity on where they stand, what they should manufacture and what could be their key areas of focus. "There was a certain amount of ambiguity in the industry, as well as the Armed Forces. Private industry used to think that whatever they invested in, the forces would import the equipment ultimately. Now, there is clarity in the minds of both parties," he said.

For the industry, it will be a huge opportunity as well as a challenge at the same time. P4

Hope for engine project

Certain challenges persist, however, especially in terms of developing a jet engine, as the project did not make much headway even after several years. But experts like Dr Kota Harinarayana, the former Director of ADA, are confident that India will be able to tackle this issue in a few years.

LEADERSHIP

Manmohan offered PM post, Rahul refused: Cong

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Congress on Wednesday rallied behind Rahul Gandhi, saying workers want him to come back as party president.

Downplaying talks of bringing a leader not connected to the Nehru-Gandhi family, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the family has served the party unmindful of the trappings of power.

Surjewala said former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had offered to resign and make way for Rahul to take the top post, but the latter declined the offer.

On Priyanka Gandhi's comments about a non-Gandhi party chief, as mentioned in a new book, he said those were made a year ago and in a different context. "Millions of Congress workers and leaders have seen that Rahul Gandhi has led the fight tirelessly, undaunted by the setbacks and vile attacks by the Modi government. It is this fearlessness that the Congress requires, workers respect and nation needs," he added.

His statement is significant as it comes at a time when several party leaders have demanded that either Rahul take over the reins or the party elect a new chief.

In the book *India Tomorrow: Conversations with the Next Generation of Political Leaders* by Pradeep Chibber and Harsh Shah, Priyanka is quoted as saying: "Perhaps not in the (resignation) letter but elsewhere, he has said that none of us should be the president of the party and I am in full agreement with him."